

Wedding Planning Checklist

While 12 months is the ideal time to plan a wedding, the following timeline can certainly be compressed if you're working with a tighter timeline.

12 MONTHS OUT

Determine Your Budget

Before you can start anything, you have to figure out who's paying for what, how much you've got to spend and how it will be allocated. Are you and your honey aligned on what the priorities are? Have The Money Talk now and avoid unwanted surprises later when he spends half the budget on a new tux and there's not enough money left for the twelve-tier gilded cake you've been dreaming of.

Do a bit of market research to find out what things cost. Catering is a good place to start. Give us a call and we'll walk you through the options and associated costs.

Make a Guest List

If only you could invite everyone, right?! (Or maybe you'd rather not?) When deciding your head count, consider your budget and the overall feel you want. Is it a big party or a small and intimate affair? Also, who's footing the bill? Keep in mind it's protocol to dedicate a portion of the invitations to anyone who is contributing financially.

Hire a Wedding Planner

If your budget allows for it (or your peace of mind depends on it) now is the time to tap that person who will be your right-hand throughout this process. He or she will guide you through all decisions and handle execution and logistics. Your wedding planner should also be involved in your budget and help keep you on track.

Check out our list of preferred Wedding and Events planners [here](#).

Decide Formality & Overall Theme

The vibe of your wedding should be a shared vision between the two guests of honour. So pour a glass of wine/water/tea and start brainstorming with your partner. Ask yourselves: What's important to us and why? What do we value?

Also, know that the venue—more on that, below—is going to affect all of this. (Because, in most cases, we'd argue against a glam, black-tie theme for a barn wedding.)

Select the Venue

Choosing the venue is one of the most important decisions you'll make throughout this process. That's because the location affects almost everything else, from how many people you invite to what kind of flowers go on the table, the list goes on. Take the time to explore your options— not just online but in person—and choose the venue that supports your guest count, style and budget.

Select the Caterer – that's us!

Your wedding is the most important dinner party of your life so far. So how exactly do you feed 150 of your nearest and dearest? Start with hiring people you trust to deliver—interview a couple of different caterers and inquire about past wedding experience as well as style of food and presentation. Also, ask about tastings. Sampling the food may be the best way to make your choice. At Savoury Chef we are thrilled to offer tastings to show you exactly what we can do. Learn more [here](#).

Whomever you choose as your caterer, make your menu personal. This is an intimate experience so don't be afraid to work with your caterer to bring yourself into it as much as possible. If everyone knows you love pink, then a signature pink cocktail would be on point. Or if your grandma's blueberry pie is to die for, then any caterer worth working with will be more than happy to bake it for you and your guests.

11 MONTHS OUT

Choose Colour Theme & Start Thinking of Overall Design

Pull up your Pinterest board! It's time to gather inspiration, select a colour palette, and create a mood board - if that's your thing. If you're struggling, take a step back and look at things that are already in your world—like how you've decorated your home, who you follow on Instagram, what kind of fashion you like and draw inspiration from that.

Hire Vendors

Photographers, DJs, videographers and florists tend to book up quickly. Ask your caterer or venue contact who they recommend and be sure to ask to see samples of work.

Check out our complete preferred vendors list [here](#).

10 MONTHS OUT

Shop for Your Wedding Dress or Tuxedo

Even if you think you know exactly what you want, to get started we recommend following wedding and dress specific social media feeds such as [@weddingdressguide](#), [@weddingdressesofficial](#) and [@lovefindco](#). Whether you'll be shopping in your own city or plan a shopping excursion elsewhere be sure to bring along one or two others you trust will always tell you the truth!

Also, check out [these tips](#) for wedding dress shopping.

Book Hotel-Room Blocks for Guests

If you'll have guests traveling from out of town, it's a thoughtful gesture to block out rooms (and secure a discounted rate) for your guests, if your budget allows. Or perhaps you do this just for one or two VIPs.

Take Engagement Photos

Not only is now a great time to practice being in front of the camera, but this is also a time in your life to document. You don't want to miss a single moment!

And don't fret: for those who are camera shy, we have a few tips on how to pose.

1. [7 Posing Techniques](#)
2. [The Model and Influencer's Guide to Posing for Pictures](#)

Start Looking at Invitations

The wedding invitation provides a first impression of your big day as it informs the level of formality guests should expect to see. If you're going custom, start working with a graphic designer now to create your dream design. If you're going for a less involved route, you can wait until the six-month mark.

9 MONTHS OUT

Buy Your Wedding Dress

It's time to say yes to the dress if you want to avoid rush fees.

Send Save-the-Dates

Let everyone officially know when and where you're making it official. And remember: everyone who gets a save-the-date gets a wedding invite. No exceptions.

8 MONTHS OUT

Register for Gifts

Involve your partner this one—after all, you two are building a life (and home) together. When registering, it's smart to ask for staples—like sheets and pots and pans, and so on—but it's even more genius to think about what you really want. Are you adventurers? Aspiring chefs? Charity givers? Consider your hobbies and tailor your registry to your lifestyle.

Select the Bridesmaids' Dresses & Schedule Fittings

Here we say, ask each bridesmaid's individual opinion on what styles she feels comfortable in. They're the ones who have to wear it and there are few groups of women who all want to wear the same thing. You could choose a colour palette and let them choose their own dress. Black is always an easy and sophisticated option. [Check out this guide](#) to selecting mismatched dresses that look great together.

Book the Rehearsal-Dinner Venue

We love the idea of hosting a family-style dinner at your favorite restaurant or a casual celebration like a clambake or backyard BBQ. If it's at a private home inquire with your caterer if they can help (who needs to be cooking so close to the big day?). And try to plan the rehearsal dinner for a few days before the wedding and not the night before (which is when you should be getting to bed early).

Hire the Ceremony Musicians

If you're enlisting the talents of a three-piece band, now's the time to do so. As for the actual music, we say don't go generic when you can go personal!

Order Rental Items

This includes things like specialty chairs, linens, draping, lounge furniture, white dance floor, etc.

You may think of these as "extras" but great rentals essentially act as the good bones of your wedding-day decor. Don't skimp on upgraded chairs and cozy lounge furniture (your guests will thank you) if your budget allows.

Hire an Officiant

If you aren't marrying in a house of worship, you'll need to hire someone to make it official.

Hire a Lighting Technician

The most important detail brides forget about is lighting. Seriously, the bulbs and candles you select are what will ultimately light your perfect venue, make your photos just right, and keep the party going—even after the sun sets.

Check out [our list of preferred vendors](#).

Book Transportation for Guests, if needed

How do you know if it's needed? Consider your venue's parking situation, guests' access to car services or public transportation, and the cost you're asking them to incur. Good rule of thumb: If it's going to run them \$20 or more—especially if you've already asked them to travel for a destination wedding—think about a shuttle bus.

Book the Bride & Groom's Transportation

Whether you want to arrive in a stretch Escalade limo, or roll in on bicycles, you'll need to plan your entrance (and exit).

Book the Honeymoon

Traditionally, wedding etiquette states the groom plans a surprise honeymoon for the bride. But it's a modern world and things have changed. (Hallelujah!) . if you guys are tag-teaming your honeymoon strategy, try to have things semi-sorted out by this five-month mark. That means being on the same page about budget, timing, travel arrangements, and a semblance of an itinerary.

Buy or Rent the Groom's Tuxedo

Step one is choosing between a tux or suit, based on the formality of your wedding, and then deciding whether to buy or rent. When selecting the actual ensemble, go for the best fit and quality your budget will allow.

Choose Your Cake

Time again to go scrolling through Instagram: [@modernweddingcakes](#), [@theweddingcakeshoppe](#) and [@sweethollywood](#) can all provide inspiration. Once you have an idea of what style you want it's time to book a baker. Keep in mind, some couples choose to go with a "prop" cake (one layer of cake and the other layers are plastic and for show only) for the sake of photography and then serve something completely different, such as cupcakes, Croquembouche or cake pops.

Buy Wedding Bands

There may be occasions in your life (such as when you travel. Or when you're gardening) when you choose to wear only your wedding band, without your engagement ring. Keep that in mind when choosing a style. Select groomsmen's attire and schedule fittings within the month. Involve the groom in this stage. It may be easier for him to get his men in line to present a very neat, orderly and well-dressed group.

Hair & Makeup Trial

Help your stylists help you by researching some particular looks before you come in for your trials. Look back at old photos of yourself so you can find something that's worked before and ensures you still look like yourself. And that part is key - you want to look like yourself. This is not a time to be trying something new and different.

3 MONTHS OUT

Order the Invitations

There are a few guidelines for managing invitations: Order extras to allow for some mistakes (if you're handwriting any part, such as the envelopes), set up a system for recording RSVP replies, and confirm all addresses and spelling. RSVPs should be set for one month before the wedding.

When it comes to design, remember to keep the theme of the invitation consistent with the theme of the wedding. This is the first expression of the type of celebration you'll be holding and it informs the level of formality (or lack thereof) that guests should expect.

Decide on the Menu

Once you've undergone a successful tasting, you'll have a good sense of your caterer's style and offerings, so you're ready to finalize your food. Maybe you're the couple who's hand-selected every hors d'oeuvres, main, side, dessert, and drink situation. Or, perhaps you just told your chef to "handle it" and called it a day. Either way, now is the time to stamp your approval on a completed menu that fits your budget, tastes, and timing.

Write Your Vows

If you've opted to write your own promises to one another, start thinking about what those should sound like for you two as a couple. Once written, practise reciting in front of a mirror or use your phone to shoot yourself speaking. That'll help calm the nerves on the day.

Select Readings

Bible verses are an obvious choice here, but there are plenty of non-religious options as well. If you'd like for your readers to choose their own, make sure you give them as much guidance as possible.

Meet with the Officiant & Invite Him or Her to the Rehearsal Dinner

Can your officiant of choice lawfully, affordably, and meaningfully help you two become one? Once you've chosen, make sure he or she is on the same page as you about your expectations and the overall tone you want for your ceremony.

2 MONTHS OUT

Send the Wedding Invitations

You've done the hard part, now it's time to stuff and stamp.

Send Out Rehearsal-Dinner Invitations (these can be included with the wedding invitations if you like)

If your partner and his or her family are handling the rehearsal dinner, make sure you give them an accurate list of addresses, and feel free to discuss the design and overall aesthetic of the rehearsal dinner.

First Dress Fitting

A lot of brides tend to lose a few pounds in the lead up to their wedding day. Schedule one fitting a couple of months before your date and then a second fitting a week prior.

Pick Up Your Marriage License

You wouldn't be the first to forget this step! Every province and state have different requirements so Google what's required in your area.

Buy Wedding-Party Gifts

How much you spend on your bridesmaids gifts is determined on an individual basis, but no matter your price point, your goal should be something that's as thoughtful, functional, and personalized as possible.

Stumped? Find some [inspiration here](#).

Do a Floral Mock-Up with Your Florist

Floral samples vary depending on your florist and your own wedding decor choices, but most of the time they'll include a mock reception table set-up, centerpiece, and bouquet. Now is also the time to talk tweaks and finalize your delivery and care strategy.

Give the Song Selections to Your Band or DJ

[Here is some song inspiration](#).

Give the Song Selections to Your Ceremony Musicians

We've got suggestions on ceremony music, too. [View here](#).

1 MONTHS OUT

Pay Your Vendors in Full

The last awkward situation you want to deal with right before your wedding day is a vendor chasing money. Avoid that by keeping careful track of when and how much you pay each vendor. If there are some vendors who must be paid the day-of, or you're distributing tips, give your most trusted bridesmaid or relative a heads-up that come wedding day, you'll be counting on them to handle the labeled envelopes you're going to put together.

Create a Seating Chart

Who's going to sit next to crazy cousin Billy? Now's the time to decide. Not a fun task, but a necessary one. It's a balancing act of relationships, egos and possibly a time for crisis-management. Consider the venue's floor plan, whether or not you'll have a head table and how to best combine personalities, families and ages all in one place!

Order or Make Your Escort Cards or Place Cards

While both place cards and escort cards designate where each guest will be seated at a wedding, place cards are more specific—and also more formal—than escort cards. A place card not only directs guests to the table where each will sit during the reception, but also points each guest to his or her particular seat at the table. Escort cards simply assign a table (at which the guest can sit wherever they choose.) Whichever you choose, you'll want your cards to complement the overall theme of your wedding.

Have a Final Venue Walk-Through

Make a list of questions in advance and bring your planner or close friend or family member to bring up anything you forget.

Put Cash in Tip Envelopes for Your Planner/Delegate to Distribute

Generally speaking, you don't need to tip people who own their own business—such as photographers, videographers, and florists. It's customary to tip the following vendors: musicians, DJs, hair stylist, makeup artist, drivers, bartenders and servers. Many couples tip the wedding planner as well.

Break in Your Wedding Shoes

Walk around your hallways! Dance in your kitchen! Do everything in your power to avoid painful blisters on your wedding night.

Take Care of Things Like:

- Refreshing your hair color
- Getting your eyebrows done
- Manicure/pedicure
- Final dress fitting (a friend or bridesmaid should come with you so she can learn how to bustle if your dress requires it.)
- Pack your bags for the honeymoon (don't forget your passport if you're leaving the country), and confirm your travel arrangements
- Clean your ring (head to your jeweler to get your engagement ring professionally clean so it's extra sparkly on your wedding day.)
- Chase any RSVP stragglers and deliver the final head count
- Clear your work to-do list so you can only focus on wedding festivities and take it all in!
- Practice your vows out loud

The Night Before:

The big day is finally here! All your careful preparation and creative planning have come to fruition, and it's time to enjoy the wedding. Here's what to do...

- Eat a healthy meal
- Pack a clutch or small bag of personal items
- Drink water
- Take your dress and veil out of the bag early on and have someone steam them if needed
- Get a good night's sleep
- Put any boxes, suitcases, bags, and survival kits to bring to the ceremony or reception in the car.
- The morning of:
 - Stay off your feet as much as possible
 - Eat breakfast
 - Drink even more water
 - Lay out all the items (rings, invitations, etc.) that you want your photographer to capture
 - Say thank you to everyone around you!